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ABSTRACT

In order to determine the nature of foreign news coverage in the Arab Gulf states, a study examined six newspapers in these states (one in each country) in regard to the volume, news sources, and kinds of news (both subject categories and regions covered). Data were selected from 12 issues (one from each month) in 1986 from the following newspapers: "Al-Jazeera" from Saudi Arabia, "Al-Qabas" from Kuwait, "Al-Ittihad" from United Arab Emirates, "Arrayah" from Qatar, "Akhbar Alkhaleej" from Bahrain, and "Oman" from Oman. All newspapers provide international coverage and are considered prestigious; each has the highest circulation in its country. Stories were separated into foreign and domestic categories and measured by length. Findings indicated the following: (1) foreign news comprised more than half the total news space of these papers; (2) there was very little coverage of Latin America or East bloc countries; (3) the Conflict and Defense subject category dominated foreign news; (4) international agencies emphasized conflict at the expense of more positive news; and (5) there was a strong imbalance in the regional coverage and the subject category distribution of foreign news in the Gulf states. (Five tables of data are included, and 34 references are appended.) (MS)

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THE FLOW OF FOREIGN NEWS INTO SIX ARAB GULF NEWSPAPERS

A Paper Submitted to:

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION DIVISION OF AEJMC*

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Introduction

The distribution of news among nations has become a major issue facing the international communication system. Many observers have charged that the free flow of information has become almost a one-way flow from the developed countries to the developing countries. Sean MacBride, representing the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, noted in 1980 that the concentration of news organizations and telecommunication facilities in a "small number of highly developed countries [has] precluded any chance of a free flow between equals and resulted in a north-south news flow characterized by a situation of dependency in undeveloped countries" (p. 142).

R. L. Stevenson and R. C. Cole (1984) summarized the charges of Western domination of international news:

1) World news is defined by the West and filtered through Western values.

2) This cultural filter excludes much of the world not of immediate interest to the West.

3) Information about the Third World in the West tends to emphasize instability.

4) Distorted Western treatment of the Third World is transferred to other parts of the Third World because these countries depend on Western news agencies. (pp. 7-9)

The reliance on Western news agencies is seen as especially harmful to Third World countries, depriving them of a true knowledge of each other and the rest of the world.

The 1976 New Delhi meeting of non-aligned nations spoke of this dependence on world news agencies as "perpetuating the colonial era of dependence and domination," with news judgments remaining in the "hands of the few" (Smith, 1980, p. 69). Because the news flow between East and West is also small, the socialist countries of the East become an "invisible part of the world" both in the West and in the Third World that relies on Western news agencies (Stevenson & Cole, 1984, pp. 9-10).

The charge of distortion of news is concerned both with an emphasis on the negative and a neglect of the positive. A number of critics have claimed that the coverage of Third World countries by Western reporters consists of negative stories such as disasters, violence, and coups, while there is much ignorance of positive stories, like development news, cultural information, social issues, and education (Merrill, 1983, p. 8).

In analyzing the flow of international news, one must consider two basic questions. First, what is the nature and quantity of foreign news in particular countries and regions? Studies have often found a preponderance of hard, political news in foreign news stories (Hester, 1971; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1984). Second, who or what determines the content of international news, both in terms of regions covered and in terms of types of news stories? Studies have pointed to various national factors, such as economic,

social, political, and geographic characteristics of nations (Ahern, 1984). Some studies suggest that individual newspapers play a large part in selecting the content of foreign news stories, while others point to international wire services as the chief determiner of content (Merrill, 1983).

In order to determine the nature of foreign news coverage in the Arab Gulf states, this study examines news of six newspapers (one of each country) in regard to the volume, news sources, and kinds of news (both subject categories and regions covered). This study may help one to understand the content of foreign news in a specific region and some of the factors that influence that content. Specifically, this study may help to determine the validity of the charge that international wire services are responsible for slanting foreign news content towards the conflict and defense category.

Literature Review

Markham (1961) did a comparative study of foreign news and picture content of seven United States dailies and seven South American papers during a 30-day period. The results showed that South American papers had about twice as much foreign news as United States papers (133.1 column inches versus 61.8). Markham concluded that the United States is a news giver and South America a news receiver; whereas South

American newspapers used an average of 50 column inches daily of U.S. news, the U.S. newspapers devoted only 2.5 column inches daily to stories about South America.

Hester (1971) studied the nature of international news disseminated by the AP throughout the United States. There were about seven stories emphasizing developed nations to every three emphasizing developing nations. Military-defense news was predominant. Several individual Wisconsin papers were studied in terms of their use of the AP for foreign news. These papers had the same emphases in their foreign news as did the wire service. In 1976, another study by Hester found that news concerning Western Europe dominated the foreign news of U.S. wire services.

However, Weaver and Wilhoit's 1984 examination of Western wire services' foreign coverage found that AP and UPI, over a two-week period, carried more stories about less-developed countries than about developed countries, with AP carrying nearly twice as many stories about developing countries. Although Weaver and Wilhoit rejected the idea that wire services are ignoring the Third World, their findings supported the claim that Western news agencies tend to focus more on conflict and defense when covering developing countries. Stories of less-developed countries tended to focus more on internal conflict, politics, and crisis than did stories of industrialized countries. Weaver and Wilhoit suggested that this subject

matter difference might result from more political crises and conflict occurring in less-developed countries.

Haque (1983) examined three U.S. papers (the New York Times, the Washington Post, and the Christian Science Monitor) to determine whether their coverage of the Third World was "balanced" (a term he admitted is very vague). Of the space devoted to international news, an average of 65% dealt with the Third World; and 23% of all editorials dealt with the Third World (four times as many as those editorials covering foreign developed countries). The author concluded that the charge of a West Europe-centered news coverage was unfounded in the case of these dailies.

In his study of the Arab Middle East, Abu-Lughod (1962) found that those countries most dependent on the West for economic or political survival tended to emphasize international news the most, while those countries deeply involved in internal programs devoted less space to international news. The author suggested that low literacy rates resulted in news geared to a more elite audience that is especially interested in foreign news. Thus, the Arab newspapers devoted a larger space to international news than did comparable newspapers in America and Europe. International events reported were related to the five big powers: the United States, Britain, the Soviet Union, France, and China.

Dajani and Donohue (1973) studied six Arab dailies in Lebanon, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Algeria, and Syria in order to determine the amount of news space devoted to foreign news, the relative attention paid to various foreign countries, the types of foreign news printed, and the factors determining the flow and coverage of that news. They found a number of factors to be influential: ideological bias of the newspaper, former cultural ties during a colonial period, and political and/or economic ties. Kuwait was found to be highest in its coverage of foreign news, and the Saudi Arabian paper was one of the lowest-ranking papers in coverage of foreign news.

Abdelaziz (1981) did a study about the coverage of international news in five American and five Arab dailies. The results showed that the Arab dailies devoted greater space to international news than did American newspapers. The study also found that American newspapers tended to give little attention to education, arts and science news from abroad while the Arab papers gave considerable coverage to cultural news.

Elsarayrah (1986) conducted a study about foreign news in two Jordanian newspapers. His results showed that the two papers devoted 39.28% of their available news space to foreign news. Elsarayrah found that the Jordanian papers devoted more space to international news coming from Third World countries than they did to international news coming

from the developed countries. However, if one subtracted Arab countries from the Third World category, coverage of Third World news was relatively small.

Thoren (1968) studied the flow and content of foreign dispatches to news agencies in Sweden. Most of the material from international news services dealt with armed conflicts and defense, with political news following as the second-highest category.

Schramm and Atwood (1981) found that about 90% of foreign news stories published in Asian newspapers come from the AP, UPI, and Reuters. But they concluded that the circulation of news in Third World Asia could not be understood in terms of one factor, such as the role of international news agencies. Though newspapers selected only a small fraction of the news supplied by the wire services, individual newspapers' choice of stories was very similar to that of the wire services in terms of type of stories.

Galtung and Ruge (1965) identified twelve news factors that determined how foreign news was defined as newsworthy in an international context. Among those factors were recency (within 24 hours), unambiguity (clear interpretation), cultural proximity and relevance, unexpectedness, continuity with previous news, eliteness of the nation where the news occurs, and negativity of the news.

Shoemaker, Chang, & Brendlinger (1986, 1987) have emphasized two aspects of the construct "deviance" in determining influences on foreign news coverage in the United States. Potential for social change deviance occurs when an event threatens to disrupt the status quo in the country of occurrence. Normative deviance refers to an event's breaking U.S. norms. In the 1987 study, both aspects of deviance were found to be important predictors of foreign events covered in U.S. papers, along with geographical distance and relevance to the United States.

In 1987 Wilke attempted to place the debate about international news flow in a historical perspective by examining newspapers in Britain, France, Germany, and the United States from the early 17th to the 20th century. The study's results showed that the number of foreign news items per week generally has steadily increased with time, although the percentage of international and domestic news in particular countries changed with political conditions. The percentage of international news in U.S. papers in modern times (10% or less) was the lowest of the four countries. In regard to news flow between countries, Wilke concluded that throughout the period studied the news flow between countries was generally not balanced, that changes in international news flow depended on shifts in world political power relationships, and that in modern times the attention given to world regions has become more balanced.

Kariel and Rosenvall (1984) summarized and tested the conclusions of previous research in regard to factors influencing news flow. The authors concluded that distance was significant only when relatively short distances were involved. Cultural affinity was an important factor in this and many other studies. Population was viewed as an important factor, but the authors concluded that a factor such as trade might be more important. The wealth of nations (in terms of GNP) was another factor. Eliteness, the relative standing of nations in the eyes of other nations, is a vague concept, but it was found to be the most significant of the variables studied.

Hypotheses

Abdelaziz and Abu-Lughod found that Arab dailies devoted a greater percentage of their space to international news than did American newspapers. Moreover, since the Arab Gulf countries in this study are relatively low in terms of the eliteness of nations, population, and size, one would expect a strong flow of news from abroad. Hypothesis 1: "Arab Gulf newspapers devote more space to foreign news than to domestic news."

Although Elsarayrah (1986) found that Jordanian papers devoted more space to Third World news than they did to news of developed countries, such factors as trade, cultural affinities, and the eliteness of nations would suggest that

Western Europe news will dominate the international news in the Gulf. Moreover, the papers' reliance on international wire services might also favor Western Europe.

Hypothesis 2: "The Arab Gulf newspapers devote more space to Western European news than to news about any other region."

Though the staffs of papers in these countries are growing, one would expect that these papers, like most papers in Third World countries, would rely mainly on international news agencies for foreign news. Hypothesis 3: "Arab Gulf newspapers depend much more on international news agencies as a source for foreign news than on any other source."

Some studies have found that the content of foreign news from international news services favors conflicts and political news (Hester, 1971; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1984). News values in Western journalism (and perhaps in journalism generally) tend to favor crisis situations. Moreover, Dajani and Donohue (1973) found a high preoccupation with political and economic news in the Arab press. Thus, one would expect Hypothesis 4 to be supported: "The Conflict and Defense category accounts for more of the space devoted to foreign news than does any other subject category."

Since studies have shown that the Conflict and Defense category is a major part of international wires covering the Third World, it is likely that international news agencies

account for most of the conflict and defense news in the Arab Gulf papers. Hypothesis 5 states: "In the Arab Gulf newspapers, the foreign news space devoted to conflict and defense is based more on international news agencies than on Arab news agencies."

Methodology

Stempel (1952) indicated that "increasing the sample size beyond twelve does not produce marked differences in the results" (p. 333). Therefore, the sample of this study consisted of twelve issues from the entire year of 1986 for each of the six newspapers selected. The twelve days were divided equally among twelve months (one issue per month) and were chosen randomly. Fridays were excluded because Friday is a holiday in the Islamic world and therefore some newspapers have special editions and others do not publish at all.

The study analyzed news stories' contents in six newspapers of the six Arab Gulf countries that are members of the Gulf Corporation Council (GCC). These countries have similar religious and social backgrounds, as well as common economic interests and geographic proximity. The selection consisted of one newspaper from each country as follows: Al-Jazeera from Saudi Arabia, Al-Qabas from Kuwait, Al-Ittihad from United Arab Emirates, Arrayah from Qatar, Akhbar Alkhaleej from Bahrain, and Oman from Oman.

The selection of these newspapers was based on the fact that they provide some of the best international coverage in their countries, that they are considered prestigious newspapers, and that each has the highest circulation in its country.

Markham's eight categories (1961, pp. 253) were used (along with a ninth Miscellaneous category) because of their clear distinctions and their comparability with other studies:

1. Foreign Relations includes all news pertaining to political and diplomatic relations of countries and to minor international incidents.
2. Domestic Affairs includes all news of all events, usually pertaining to social and governmental affairs, but not internal conflicts or strife.
3. Conflict and Defense includes all news covering international trouble spots and relating to the national defense of the country.
4. Science and Technology includes medicine, satellites and space, but excludes missiles and other matters of national defense.
5. International Organization News includes all news of the United Nations, NATO, and the Geneva Conference of Foreign Ministers.
6. Cultural and Religious News includes all news of the arts and religion.
7. Economic News includes news of private business, industry and finance, foreign aid, etc.
8. Human Interest, Sports, Disaster, and Crime News includes all stories that fit the usual journalistic definitions of these terms.
9. Miscellaneous includes any news items that do not fit the above categories.

This study divided the world into ten geographic regions as follows:

1. Africa: all countries on the African continent and its islands.
2. Asia: all countries of the Asian continent and

its islands excluding the Soviet Union and the countries which fall in the Middle East.

3. North America: this includes the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

4. Central America: all countries and islands between the United States and the continent and South America.

5. South America: all countries on the South American continent and its islands.

6. Middle East: this includes Turkey in the North, Iran in the East, Israel and Palestine in the West, Yemen in the South.

7. Eastern Europe: this includes East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Albania, Romania, and Bulgaria.

8. Western Europe: all countries on the European continent and its islands, and also Australia, which has special ties with Europe. This definition excludes those countries which fall under Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

9. The Soviet Union: this includes the Soviet Union and its islands.

10. Others: this includes any countries and islands which do not fit into any of the above categories.

In regard to news sources, the study used the following four categories:

1. Staff: published by reporters or correspondents of the newspaper.

2. International News Agencies.

3. Arab News Agencies.

4. Unspecified: any news that does not fit under the above categories 1, 2, and 3, including both the listing of two or more sources or no source at all.

The study classified the news items into the following two news types: 1) Foreign News: news from and about countries other than the six Arab Gulf states included in the study, and 2) Domestic News: news from and about any of

the six Arab Gulf states.

The study used the following coding units:

1. The unit of analysis was the foreign and domestic news story, including the pictures and headlines. The operational definition of foreign news story was "news from and about countries other than the six Arab Gulf states included in the study."

The definition for domestic news story was "news from and about the six Arab Gulf states."

However, opinion content, such as commentaries, editorials, and letters, was not included in the definitions.

2. The unit of measurement was space, determined by the length of each news story (including space taken by the headline and picture) in column inches.

To ensure a high degree of reliability, a second trained coder re-examined 100 random news items in terms of news type, news source, regions, and subject matter. The results were compared with the researcher's own classifications of the same items. After use of Scott's formula (1955, p. 323) to take into account the chance level of agreement between categories, there was 86% agreement in news type, 93% in news source, 84% in regions and 81% in subject matter. The 80% to 90% agreement among coders in this study satisfies Lasswell's criterion (1952, p. 16).

Results and Discussion

Tables 1-4 report the means (in column inches) and percentages of total space for the volumes, regions covered, news sources, and subject matter of foreign news. Table 5 reports the subject-category means and percentages of total news space based on the sources of international news agencies and Arab news agencies.

Hypothesis 1 stated: "Arab Gulf newspapers devote more space to foreign news than to domestic news." Table 1 shows the means of domestic news (413.4 column inches) and foreign news (449.1 column inches). Although there was more foreign than domestic news, the difference was rather small and a t-test showed that the hypothesis was not supported at the .05 level of significance.

Hypothesis 2 stated: "The Arab Gulf newspapers devote more space to Western European news than to news about any other region." Table 2 shows that coverage of the Middle East (135.6 mean) and Africa (89.7 mean) exceeded that of Western Europe (80.3 mean). In regard to all other regions, however, the hypothesis was supported, as Western Europe received the third-highest coverage. Application of ANOVA (one-way analysis of variance) showed a significant difference (0.00) at the level of .05 between regions; a Scheffe test found the category of Western Europe to differ significantly from all regions except Africa and the Middle East.

Table 1

The Means and Percentage of Total Space by News Types

Types of news	Mean (column inches)	Percentage
Foreign news	449.13	52.1
Domestic news	413.44	47.9
		100

$t = 1.38$, d.f. = 141.35, $P < 0.0855$

Note: Percentages are rounded.

Table 2

The Means and Percentage of Total Space of Foreign News By Regions

Region	Mean (column inches)	Percentage
Middle East	135.61	33
Africa	89.69	21.8
Western Europe	80.34	19.5
North America	49.08	11.9
Asia	38.50	9.2
The Soviet Union	13.44	2.1
South America	10.94	1.6
Central America	7.50	0.2
Eastern Europe	6.73	0.6
		100

$F = 72.7568$, $p < .0000$

Note: Percentages are rounded.

It is interesting to compare the regional coverage of the Gulf papers with Weaver and Wilhoit's breakdown of regional coverage by Reuters' Mideast Wire (1984, p. 159). Africa, the Middle East, and Western Europe were also the regions most covered by Reuters, with the Mideast receiving 55% of the wire news, Western Europe 18%, and Africa 13%. Eastern Europe and Latin America news accounted for only 4% of the Reuters Mideast wire (about the same percentage that appeared in the Gulf papers).

Hypothesis 3 stated: "Arab Gulf newspapers depend much more on international news agencies as a source for foreign news than on any other source." Table 3 shows that, of the three specified sources, the international news agencies were the largest source, but there was little difference between the means of International News Agencies (102.6) and Arab News Agencies (92.3). Hypothesis 3 was supported only in regard to the Staff category (54.14 mean). The ANOVA test showed a significant difference between news sources with a probability of 0.019. However, application of a Scheffe test found that International News Agencies differed significantly only from the Staff category.

Hypothesis 4 stated: "The Conflict and Defense category accounts for more of the space devoted to foreign news than does any other subject category." Table 4 shows that Conflict and Defense was by far the strongest category, with a mean of 179. The next category, Human Interest, had a

Table 3

The Means and Percentage of Total Space of Foreign News According to News Sources

New sources	Mean (column inches)	Percentage
Unspecified	200.07	44.5
International news agencies	102.60	22.8
Arab news agencies	92.30	20.6
Staff	54.14	12.1
		100

$F = 4.0408$, $p < .0191$

Note: Percentages are rounded.

Table 4

The Means and Percentage of Total Foreign News Space According to Subject Matter Categories

Subject matter	Mean (column inches)	Percentage
Conflict and defense	179.06	40
Human interest	94.70	21.1
Foreign relations	56.72	12.7
Domestic affairs	44.33	9.6
International organizations News	40.56	8.2
Cultural and religious news	17.70	3.1
Economic News	17.30	3.3
Science and technology	11.45	2.0
		100

$F = 122.2578$, $p < .0000$

Note: Percentages are rounded.

mean of 94.7, about half the size of Conflict and Defense, while Foreign Relations was the third-highest category (56.7). A Scheffe test showed a significant difference (at the level of .05) between Conflict and Defense and all other categories. Thus, Hypothesis 4 was strongly supported.

Hypothesis 5 stated: "In the Arab Gulf papers, the foreign news space devoted to Conflict and Defense is based more on international news agency sources than on Arab news agency sources." Table 5 shows that the Conflict and Defense mean for space based on international agency sources was 47.6, while the Conflict and Defense mean for Arab agency sources was only 32.3. Application of a t-test showed that Hypothesis 5 was supported at a level of probability of .003.

However, since international agency sources accounted for slightly more of the total news space than did Arab agency sources (22.8% to 20.6%), more analysis is needed here for a meaningful discussion. One must compare the proportion of their total space that the two agency sources gave various subject categories. The greatest differences in the proportions of the two agency sources were in the subjects of Foreign Relations (which accounted for 23% of Arab agency space but only 10.7% of international agency space), Conflict and Defense (44.5% for international. 34.2% for Arab), International Organizations (4.1 international agency, 12.6 Arab) and Human Interest (27.1 international,

Table 5

The Means and Percentage of Total Space of Foreign News by International and Arab News Agencies According to Subject Matter Categories

Subject matter	International news agencies		Arab news agencies	
	Mean (column inches)	Percentage	Mean (column inches)	Percentage
Conflict and defense	47.56	44.5	32.32	34.2
Foreign relations	13.37	10.7	21.79	23.0
International organization news	10.77	4.1	18.91	12.6
Domestic affairs	13.06	8.5	13.77	10.6
Human interest	38.35	27.1	12.77	11.6
Economic news	11.02	3.0	7.05	3.1
Science and technology	5.38	1.2	7.05	2.2
Cultural and religious news	5.50	0.9	6.94	2.7
		100		100

$t = 2.82$, d.f. 116.37, $P < 0.003$

Note: Percentages are rounded.

11.6 Arab). News based on Arab agencies did give a higher proportion of total space to cultural and religious news and science and technology news, but these categories received little space in the case of either news agency source (only 2.7% of Arab agency news devoted to Culture and Religion, 0.9% of international agency space).

Conclusions

Criticism of the flow of international news has focused on neglect of certain regions of the world, especially the undeveloped countries, and a tendency for international news agencies to emphasize instability and crisis in Third World countries. In addition, critics charge that, since many Third World newspapers rely on international news agencies for their foreign news, the undeveloped countries see the rest of the Third World through the distorted eyes of the international news agencies. The results of this study, though limited to a small part of the Third World, provide some additional evidence with which to examine the validity of these charges.

Clearly, foreign news is an important part of the Gulf newspapers, comprising more than half the total news space of these papers. Markham (1961) reported that the New York Times published an average of over 219 column inches of foreign news daily; in contrast, the mean for the Gulf papers was 449 column inches of foreign news. The

percentage of space devoted to foreign news in the Gulf papers was higher than that in Elsarayrah's (1986) study of Jordanian papers (39%).

The charge that the regional coverage of foreign news is imbalanced was both supported and rejected by the results of this study. While the Middle East was the largest regional category (33% of total space), African news made up 21.8% of foreign news in the Gulf papers, and Asian news made up 9.2%. Of course, the results do not show whether many different countries were included in this coverage or whether coverage was limited to a few major countries (such as Egypt in Africa), but one cannot conclude, as Elsarayrah (1986) did, that Third World coverage was relatively small if one subtracted the Middle East from Third World coverage. This study did show very small coverage of Latin America and of East bloc countries, giving possible support to the charge that Western news agencies make the socialist countries of the East an "invisible part of the world" (Stevenson & Cole, 1984).

The degree of reliance on international news agencies was not clearly determined by this study's results. The large Unspecified category (making up 44.5% of total space) probably includes a large percentage of news space based at least partially on international news agencies. The percentage of news space attributed to international agency sources was close to that attributed to Arab agency sources

(22.8% and 20.6%, respectively). Staff sources were relatively minor (only 12.1%).

This study strongly supported the view that the Conflict and Defense subject category dominates foreign news. Almost 40% of total space was devoted to this category. The study also supported the observation that foreign news is primarily hard (political) news, although the Human Interest category made up 21% of the total space. Cultural and religious news, economic news, and science news made up very small percentages of the total space.

One goal of this study was to determine the influence of international news agency sources on subject matter by comparing stories based on international agencies with those based on Arab agencies. Of course, a direct comparison of the wire mixes would produce a more precise evaluation, since gatekeeping choices may distort the wire mix. The results of this study showed that the Conflict and Defense category was the chief category for news space both for international and Arab agency stories. However, the Conflict and Defense category accounted for a considerably higher percentage of the total international agency space than it did for the total Arab agency space (44.5% versus 34.2%). Thus, this study suggests some support for the view that international agencies emphasize conflict at the expense of more positive news.

In order to better evaluate the influences of international news agencies on foreign news in the Middle East, future studies might take a number of approaches. An analysis of wire mixes in regard to subject categories is important. Future studies might also examine whether the subject category distribution of news about a region such as Africa (primarily Third World) is similar or different from that of Western Europe or North America. Studies could also determine whether news is slanted negatively by using more precise subject categories or by evaluating the slant of individual stories. Some of Markham's categories, such as Human Interest, may contain both positive and negative stories (crime and sports). Finally, there should be comparisons of several Mideast newspapers to determine whether gatekeeping choices are affecting foreign news coverage and whether other factors (such as audience, newspaper ideology, and trade) are influential.

The charge of imbalanced and negatively slanted foreign news coverage is not one that will be answered by studies alone. As Weaver and Wilhoit (1984) noted, there may be justification for a greater emphasis on conflict and defense in countries where there is political instability. One must also recognize that the relative prestige of a country will always be an influential factor in foreign news coverage. and in the case of some countries. such as the East bloc countries, foreign reporters may have limited access to

news.

The results of this study indicate a strong imbalance both in the regional coverage and the subject category distribution of foreign news in the Gulf states. The regional imbalance is not really one of neglect of the Third World, but rather an almost total neglect of Latin America and Eastern bloc countries. The reasons for this neglect are not wholly clear, but since the Gulf papers rely on staff for only about 12% of their foreign news, the regional coverage by news agencies is very influential. The large percentage of space devoted to the Conflict and Defense category in the Gulf papers also indicates an imbalance. Surely, there should be a greater proportion of space given to social affairs, economic news, and cultural news.

With such gaps in information flow, a new era of international understanding cannot begin.

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